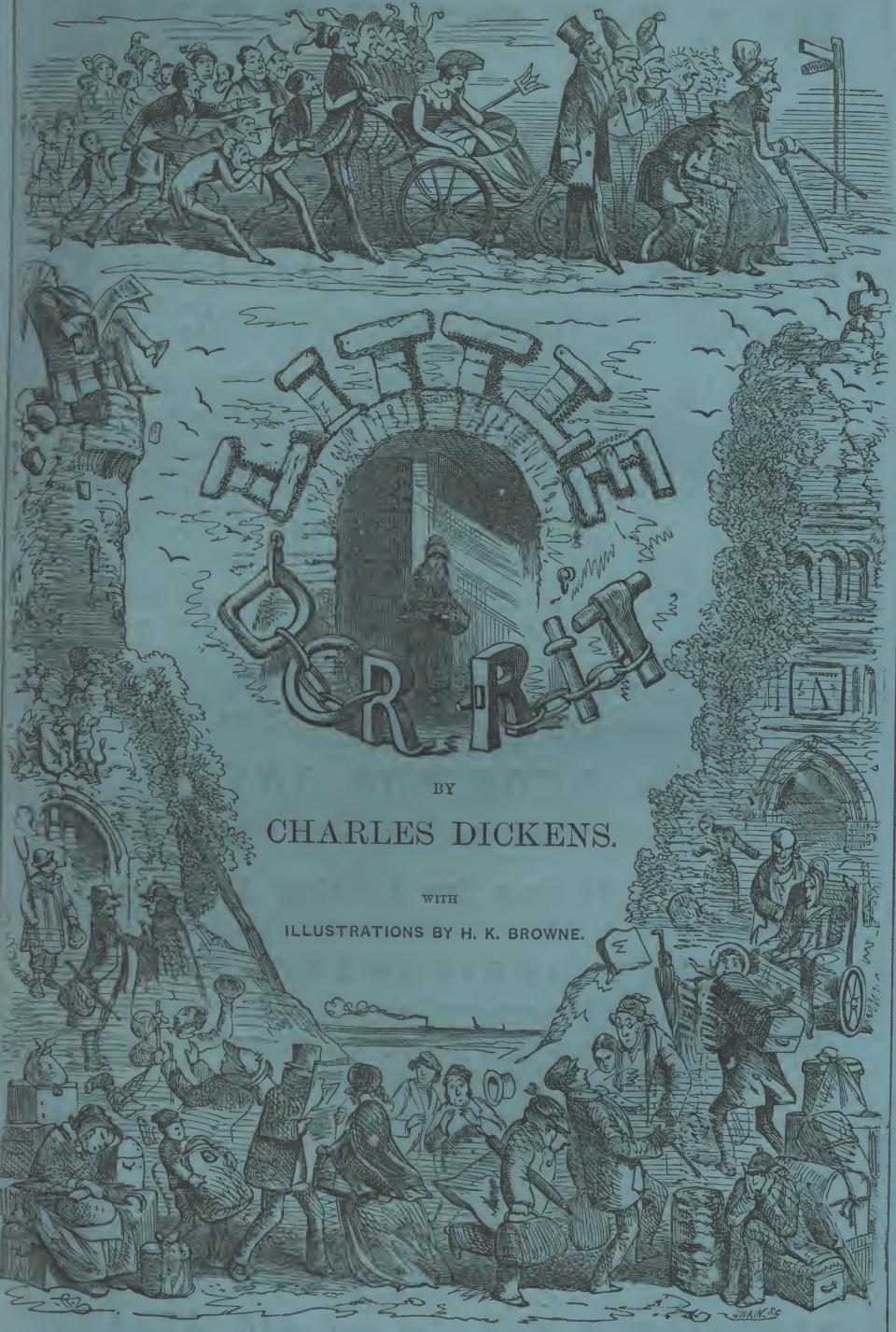


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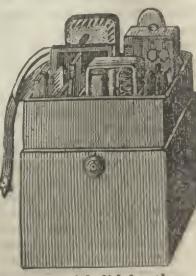
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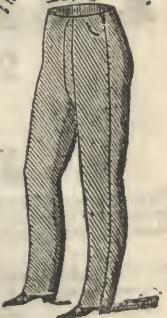
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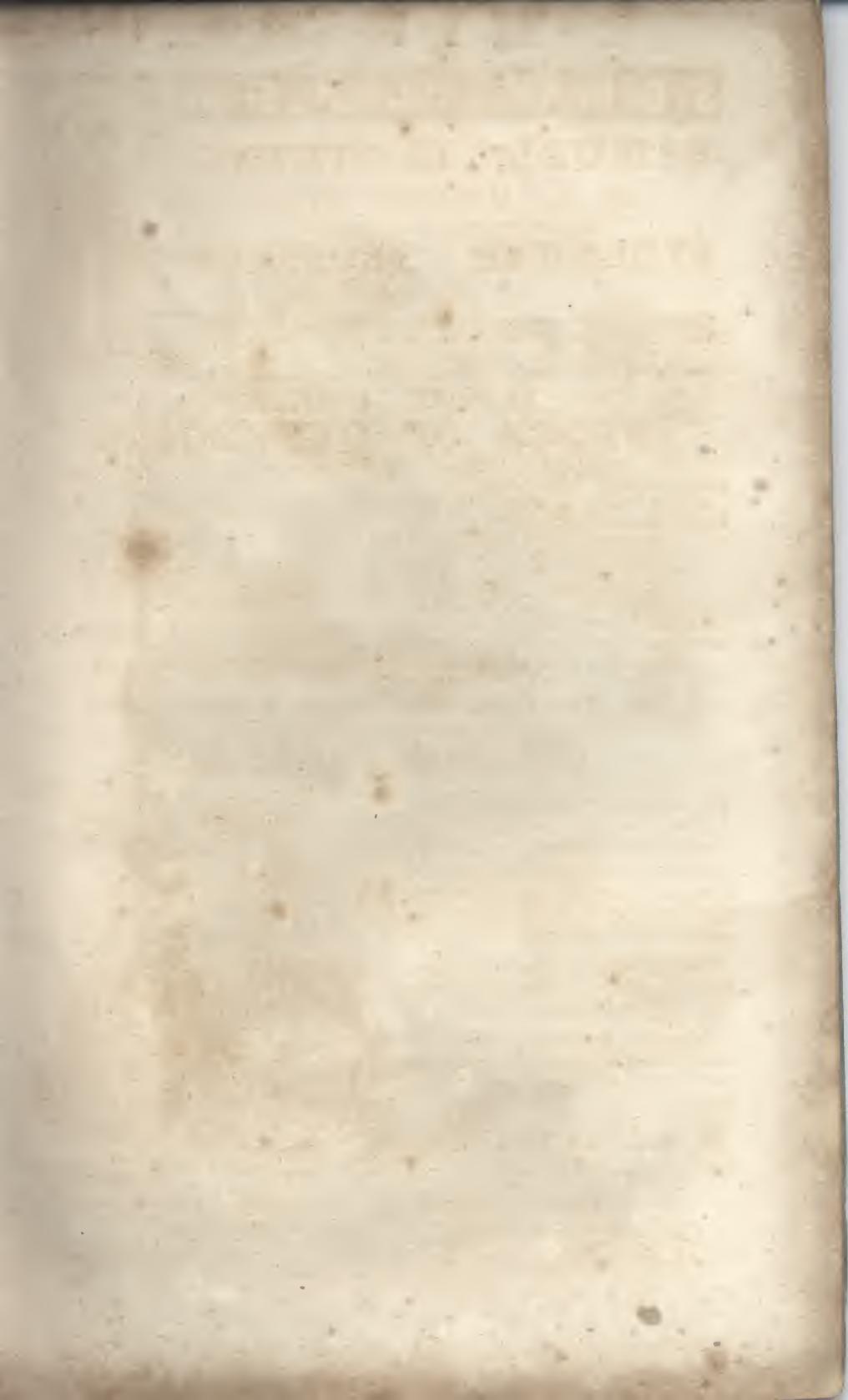
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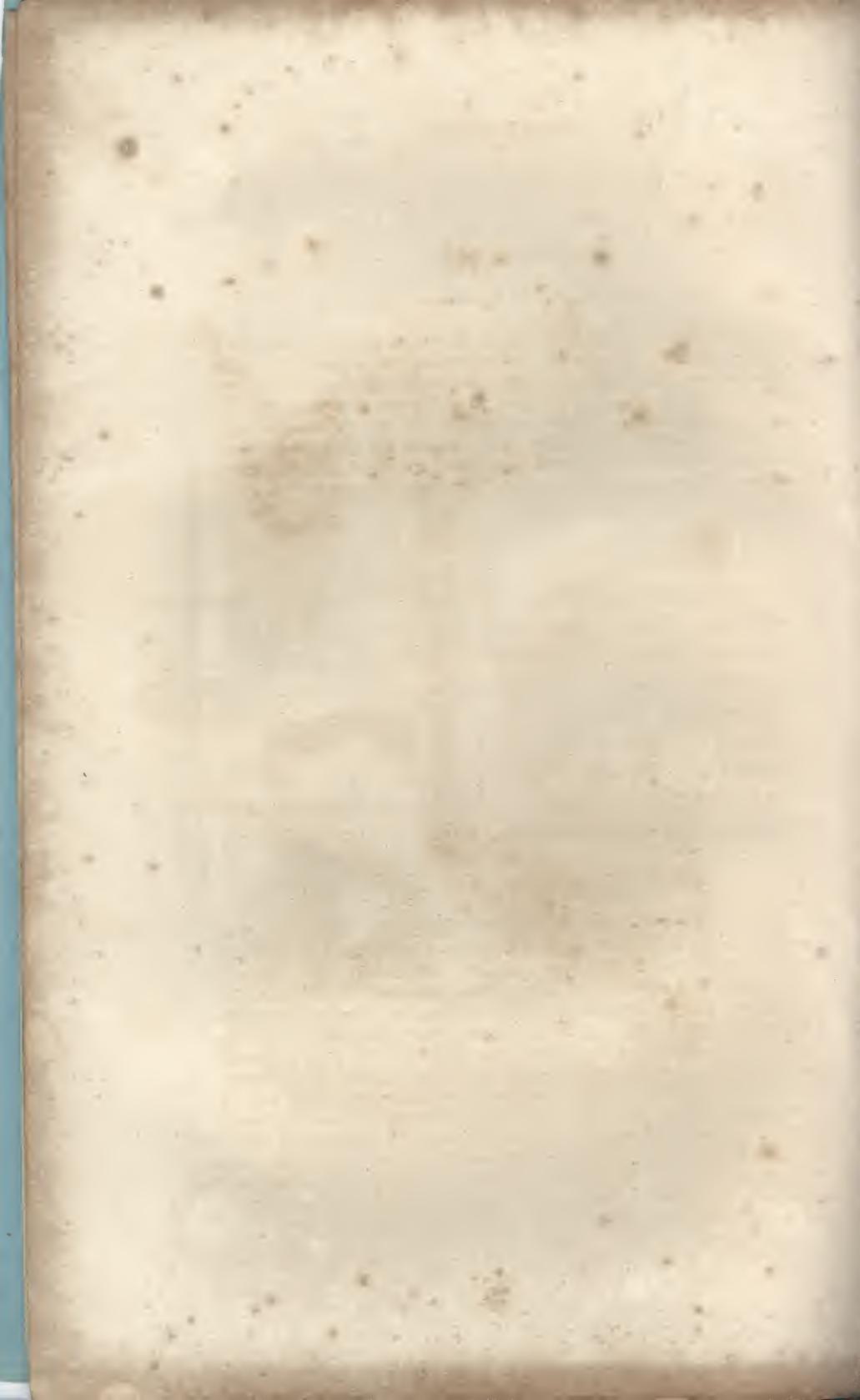




*For unexpected After-Dinner Speech*



*The Night.*



## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE STORMING OF THE CASTLE IN THE AIR.

THE sun had gone down full four hours, and it was later than most travellers would like it to be for finding themselves outside the walls of Rome, when Mr. Dorrit's carriage, still on its last wearisome stage, rattled over the solitary Campagna. The savage herdsmen and the fierce-looking peasants, who had chequered the way while the light lasted, had all gone down with the sun, and left the wilderness blank. At some turns of the road, a pale flare on the horizon, like an exha-

By an oversight of the Author's, which he did not observe until it was too late for correction in the first impression of the Number for last month (No. XV.), the name RIGAUD is used in the seventeenth chapter of the Second Book, instead of BLANDOIS. The personage in the story who assumed the latter name, is habitually known to the Author by the former, as his real one; and hence the mistake. It is set right, if the reader will have the goodness to substitute the word BLANDOIS for RIGAUD, in that chapter when it occurs. The chapter commences at page 467, and ends at page 474.

the track to a long, irregular, disordered lane, where everything was crumbling away, from the unsightly buildings to the jolting road—now, these objects showed that they were nearing Rome. And now, a sudden twist and stoppage of the carriage inspired Mr. Dorrit with the mistrust that the brigand moment was come for twisting him into a ditch and robbing him; until, letting down the glass again and looking out, he perceived himself assailed by nothing worse than a funeral procession, which came mechanically chaunting by, with an indistinct show of dirty vestments, lurid torches, swinging censers, and a great cross borne before a priest. He was an ugly priest by torch-light; of a lowering aspect, with an overhanging brow; and as his eyes met those of Mr. Dorrit, looking bareheaded out of the carriage, his lips, moving as they chaunted, seemed to threaten that important traveller; likewise the action of his hand, which was in fact his manner of returning the traveller's salutation, seemed to come in aid



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Mr. Dorrit, though he had his castle-building to engage his mind, could not be quite easy in that desolate place. He was far more curious, in every swerve of the carriage and every cry of the postilions, than he had been since he quitted London. The valet on the box evidently quaked. The courier in the rumble was not altogether comfortable in his mind. As often as Mr. Dorrit let down the glass, and looked back at him (which was very often), he saw him smoking John Chivery out, it is true, but still generally standing up the while and looking about him, like a man who had his suspicions, and kept upon his guard. Then would Mr. Dorrit, pulling up the glass again, reflect that those postilions were cut-throat looking fellows, and that he would have done better to have slept at Civita Vecchia, and have started betimes in the morning. But, for all this, he worked at his castle in the intervals.

And now, fragments of ruinous enclosure, yawning window-gap and crazy wall, deserted houses, leaking wells, broken water-tanks, spectral cypress-trees, patches of tangled vine, and the changing of the track to a long, irregular, disordered lane, where everything was crumbling away, from the unsightly buildings to the jolting road—now, these objects showed that they were nearing Rome. And now, a sudden twist and stoppage of the carriage inspired Mr. Dorrit with the mistrust that the brigand moment was come for twisting him into a ditch and robbing him; until, letting down the glass again and looking out, he perceived himself assailed by nothing worse than a funeral procession, which came mechanically chaunting by, with an indistinct show of dirty vestments, lurid torches, swinging censers, and a great cross borne before a priest. He was an ugly priest by torch-light; of a lowering aspect, with an overhanging brow; and as his eyes met those of Mr. Dorrit, looking bareheaded out of the carriage, his lips, moving as they chaunted, seemed to threaten that important traveller; likewise the action of his hand, which was in fact his manner of returning the traveller's salutation, seemed to come in aid

of that menace. So thought Mr. Dorrit, made fanciful by the weariness of building and travelling, as the priest drifted past him, and the procession straggled away, taking its dead along with it. Upon their so-different way went Mr. Dorrit's company too; and soon, with their coach-load of luxuries from the two great capitals of Europe, they were (like the Goths reversed) beating at the gates of Rome.

Mr. Dorrit was not expected by his own people that night. He had been; but, they had given him up until to-morrow, not doubting that it was later than he would care, in those parts, to be out. Thus, when his equipage stopped at his own gate, no one but the porter appeared to receive him. Was Miss Dorrit from home? he asked. No. She was within. Good, said Mr. Dorrit to the assembling servants; let them keep where they were; let them help to unload the carriage; he would find Miss Dorrit for himself.

So, he went up his grand staircase, slowly, and tired, and looked into various chambers which were empty, until he saw a light in a small anteroom. It was a curtained nook, like a tent, within two other rooms; and it looked warm, and bright in color, as he approached it through the dark avenue they made.

There was a draped doorway, but no door; and as he stopped here, looking in unseen, he felt a pang. Surely not like jealousy? For why like jealousy? There were only his daughter and his brother there: he, with his chair drawn to the hearth, enjoying the warmth of the evening wood fire; she, seated at a little table, busied with some embroidery-work. Allowing for the great difference in the still-life of the picture, the figures were much the same as of old; his brother being sufficiently like himself to represent himself, for a moment, in the composition. So had he sat many a night, over a coal fire far away; so had she sat, devoted to him. Yet surely there was nothing to be jealous of in the old miserable poverty. Whence, then, the pang in his heart?

“Do you know, uncle, I think you are growing young again?”

Her uncle shook his head, and said, “Since when, my dear; since when?”

“I think,” returned Little Dorrit, plying her needle, “that you have been growing younger for weeks past. So cheerful, uncle, and so ready, and so interested!”

“My dear child—all you.”

“All me, uncle!”

“Yes, yes. You have done me a world of good. You have been so considerate of me, and so tender with me, and so delicate in trying to hide your attentions from me, that I—well, well, well! It's treasured up, my darling, treasured up.”

“There is nothing in it but your own fresh fancy, uncle,” said Little Dorrit, cheerfully.

“Well, well, well!” murmured the old man. “Thank God!”

She paused for an instant in her work to look at him, and her look revived that former pain in her father's breast; in his poor weak breast, so full of contradictions, vacillations, inconsistencies, the little peevish perplexities of this ignorant life, mists which the morning without a night only can clear away.

"I have been freer with you, you see, my dove," said the old man, "since we have been alone. I say, alone, for I don't count Mrs. General; I don't care for her; she has nothing to do with me. But I know Fanny was impatient of me. And I don't wonder at it, or complain of it, for I am sensible that I must be in the way, though I try to keep out of it as well as I can. I know I am not fit company for our company. My brother William," said the old man admiringly, "is fit company for monarchs; but not so your uncle, my dear. Frederick Dorrit is no credit to William Dorrit, and he knows it quite well. Ah! Why, here's your father, Amy! My dear William, welcome back! My beloved brother, I am rejoiced to see you!"

(Turning his head in speaking, he had caught sight of him as he stood in the doorway.)

Little Dorrit with a cry of pleasure put her arms about her father's neck, and kissed him again and again. Her father was a little impatient, and a little querulous. "I am glad to find you at last, Amy," he said. "Ha. Really I am glad to find—hum—anyone to receive me at last. I appear to have been—ha—so little expected, that upon my word I began—ha hum—to think it might be right to offer an apology for—ha—taking the liberty of coming back at all."

"It was so late, my dear William," said his brother, "that we had given you up for to-night."

"I am stronger than you, dear Frederick," returned his brother, with an elaboration of fraternity in which there was severity; "and I hope I can travel without detriment at—ha—any hour I choose."

"Surely, surely," returned the other, with a misgiving that he had given offence. "Surely, William."

"Thank you, Amy," pursued Mr. Dorrit, as she helped him to put off his wrappers, "I can do it without assistance. I—ha—need not trouble you, Amy. Could I have a morsel of bread and a glass of wine, or—hum—would it cause too much inconvenience?"

"Dear father, you shall have supper in a very few minutes."

"Thank you, my love," said Mr. Dorrit, with a reproachful frost upon him; "I—ha—am afraid I am causing inconvenience. Hum. Mrs. General pretty well?"

"Mrs. General complained of a headache, and of being fatigued; and so, when we gave you up, she went to bed, dear."

Perhaps Mr. Dorrit thought that Mrs. General had done well in being overcome by the disappointment of his not arriving. At any rate, his face relaxed, and he said with obvious satisfaction, "Extremely sorry to hear that Mrs. General is not well."

During this short dialogue, his daughter had been observant of him, with something more than her usual interest. It would seem as though he had a changed or worn appearance in her eyes, and he perceived and resented it; for, he said, with renewed peevishness, when he had divested himself of his travelling cloak, and had come to the fire :

"Amy, what are you looking at? What do you see in me that causes you to—ha—concentrate your solicitude on me in that—hum—very particular manner?"

"I did not know it, father; I beg your pardon. It gladdens my eyes to see you again; that's all."

"Don't say that's all, because—ha—that's not all. You—hum—you think," said Mr. Dorrit, with an accusatory emphasis, "that I am not looking well."

"I thought you looked a little tired, love."

"Then you are mistaken," said Mr. Dorrit. "Ha, I am *not* tired. Ha, hum. I am very much fresher than I was, when I went away."

He was so inclined to be angry, that she said nothing more in her justification, but remained quietly beside him embracing his arm. As he stood thus, with his brother on the other side, he fell into a heavy doze of not a minute's duration, and awoke with a start.

"Frederick," he said, turning on his brother: "I recommend you to go to bed immediately."

"No, William. I'll wait and see you sup."

"Frederick," he retorted, "I beg you to go to bed. I—ha—make it a personal request that you go to bed. You ought to have been in bed long ago. You are very feeble."

"Hah!" said the old man, who had no wish but to please him. "Well, well, well! I dare say I am."

"My dear Frederick," returned Mr. Dorrit, with an astonishing superiority to his brother's failing powers, "there can be no doubt of it. It is painful to me to see you so weak. Ha. It distresses me. Hum. I don't find you looking at all well. You are not fit for this sort of thing. You should be more careful, you should be very careful."

"Shall I go to bed?" asked Frederick.

"Dear Frederick," said Mr. Dorrit, "do, I adjure you! Good-night, brother. I hope you will be stronger to-morrow. I am not at all pleased with your looks. Good-night, dear fellow." After dismissing his brother in this gracious way, he fell into a doze again, before the old man was well out of the room: and he would have stumbled forward upon the logs, but for his daughter's restraining hold.

"Your uncle wanders very much, Amy," he said, when he was thus roused. "He is less—ha—coherent, and his conversation is more—hum—broken, than I have—ha hum—ever known. Has he had any illness since I have been gone?"

"No, father."

"You—ha—see a great change in him, Amy?"

"I had not observed it, dear."

"Greatly broken," said Mr. Dorrit. "Greatly broken. My poor, affectionate, failing Frederick! Ha. Even taking into account what he was before, he is—hum—sadly broken!"

His supper, which was brought to him there, and spread upon the little table where he had seen her working, diverted his attention. She sat at his side as in the days that were gone, for the first time since those days ended. They were alone, and she helped him to his meat and poured out his drink for him, as she had been used to do in the prison. All this happened now, for the first time since their accession to wealth. She was afraid to look at him much, after the offence he had taken; but she noticed two occasions in the course of

his meal when he all of a sudden looked at her, and looked about him, as if the association were so strong that he needed assurance from his sense of sight that they were not in the old prison-room. Both times, he put his hand to his head as if he missed his old black cap—though it had been ignominiously given away in the Marshalsea, and had never got free to that hour, but still hovered about the yards on the head of his successor.

He took very little supper, but was a long time over it, and often reverted to his brother's declining state. Though he expressed the greatest pity for him, he was almost bitter upon him. He said that poor 'Frederick—ha hum—drivelled. There was no other word to express it; drivelled. Poor fellow! It was melancholy to reflect what Amy must have undergone from the excessive tediousness of his society—wandering and babbling on, poor dear estimable creature, wandering and babbling on—if it had not been for the relief she had had in Mrs. General. Extremely sorry, he then repeated with his former satisfaction, that that—ha—superior woman was poorly.

Little Dorrit, in her watchful love, would have remembered the lightest thing he said or did that night, though she had had no subsequent reason to recall that night. She always remembered, that when he looked about him under the strong influence of the old association, he tried to keep it out of her mind, and perhaps out of his own too, by immediately expatiating on the great riches and great company that had encompassed him in his absence, and on the lofty position he and his family had to sustain. Nor did she fail to recall that there were two under-currents, side by side, pervading all his discourse and all his manner; one, showing her how well he had got on without her, and how independent he was of her; the other, in a fitful and unintelligible way almost complaining of her, as if it had been possible that she had neglected him while he was away.

His telling her of the glorious state that Mr. Merdle kept, and of the Court that bowed before him, naturally brought him to Mrs. Merdle. So naturally indeed, that although there was an unusual want of sequence in the greater part of his remarks, he passed to her at once, and asked how she was.

"She is very well. She is going away next week."

"Home?" asked Mr. Dorrit.

"After a few weeks' stay upon the road."

"She will be a vast loss here," said Mr. Dorrit. "A vast—ha—acquisition at home. To Fanny, and to—hum—the rest of the—ha—great world."

Little Dorrit thought of the competition that was to be entered upon, and assented very softly.

"Mrs. Merdle is going to have a great farewell Assembly, dear, and a dinner before it. She has been expressing her anxiety that you should return in time. She has invited both you and me to her dinner."

"She is—ha—very kind. When is the day?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"Write round in the morning, and say that I have returned, and shall—hum—be delighted."

"May I walk with you up the stairs to your room, dear?"

"No!" he answered, looking angrily round; for he was moving away, as if forgetful of leave-taking. "You may not, Amy. I want no help. I am your father, not your infirm uncle!" He checked himself, as abruptly as he had broken into this reply, and said, "You have not kissed me, Amy. Good night, my dear! We must marry—ha—we must marry *you*, now." With that he went, more slowly and more tired, up the staircase to his rooms, and, almost as soon as he got there, dismissed his valet. His next care was to look about him for his Paris purchases, and, after opening their cases and carefully surveying them, to put them away under lock and key. After that, what with dozing and what with castle-building, he lost himself for a long time, so that there was a touch of morning on the eastward rim of the desolate Campagna when he crept to bed.

Mrs. General sent up her compliments in good time next day, and hoped he had rested well after his fatiguing journey. He sent down his compliments, and begged to inform Mrs. General that he had rested very well indeed, and was in high condition. Nevertheless, he did not come forth from his own rooms until late in the afternoon; and, although he then caused himself to be magnificently arrayed for a drive with Mrs. General and his daughter, his appearance was scarcely up to his description of himself.

As the family had no visitors that day, its four members dined alone together. He conducted Mrs. General to the seat at his right hand, with immense ceremony; and Little Dorrit could not but notice, as she followed with her uncle, both that he was again elaborately dressed, and that his manner towards Mrs. General was very particular. The perfect formation of that accomplished lady's surface rendered it difficult to displace an atom of its genteel glaze, but Little Dorrit thought she descried a slight thaw of triumph in a corner of her frosty eye.

Notwithstanding what may be called in these pages the Pruney and Prismatic nature of the family banquet, Mr. Dorrit several times fell asleep while it was in progress. His fits of dozing were as sudden as they had been over-night, and were as short and profound. When the first of these slumberings seized him, Mrs. General looked almost amazed: but, on each recurrence of the symptoms, she told her polite beads, Papa, Potatoes, Poultry, Prunes, and Prism; and, by dint of going through that infallible performance very slowly, appeared to finish her rosary at about the same time as Mr. Dorrit started from his sleep.

He was again painfully aware of a somnolent tendency in Frederick (which had no existence out of his own imagination), and after dinner, when Frederick had withdrawn, privately apologised to Mrs. General for the poor man. "The most estimable and affectionate of brothers," he said, "but—ha hum—broken up altogether. Unhappily, declining fast."

"Mr. Frederick, sir," quoth Mrs. General, "is habitually absent and drooping, but let us hope it is not so bad as that."

Mr. Dorrit, however, was determined not to let him off. "Fast declining, madam. A wreck. A ruin. Mouldering away, before our eyes. Hum. Good Frederick!"

"You left Mrs. Sparkler quite well and happy, I trust?" said Mrs. General, after heaving a cool sigh for Frederick.

"Surrounded," replied Mr. Dorrit, "by—ha—all that can charm the taste, and—hum—elevate the mind. Happy, my dear madam, in a—hum—husband."

Mrs. General was a little fluttered; seeming delicately to put the word away with her gloves, as if there were no knowing what it might lead to.

"Fanny," Mr. Dorrit continued. "Fanny, Mrs. General, has high qualities. Ha. Ambition—hum—purpose, consciousness of—ha—position, determination to support that position—ha hum—grace, beauty, and native nobility."

"No doubt," said Mrs. General (with a little extra stiffness).

"Combined with these qualities, madam," said Mr. Dorrit, "Fanny has—ha—manifested one blemish which has made me—hum—made me uneasy, and—ha—I must add angry; but which I trust may now be considered at an end, even as to herself, and which is undoubtedly at an end as to—ha—others."

"To what, Mr. Dorrit," returned Mrs. General, with her gloves again somewhat excited, "can you allude? I am at a loss to—"

"Do not say that, my dear madam," interrupted Mr. Dorrit.

Mrs. General's voice, as it died away, pronounced the words, "at a loss to imagine."

After which, Mr. Dorrit was seized with a doze for about a minute, out of which he sprang with spasmodic nimbleness.

"I refer, Mrs. General, to that—ha—strong spirit of opposition, or—hum—I might say—ha—jealousy in Fanny, which has occasionally risen against the—ha—sense I entertain of—hum—the claims of—ha—the lady with whom I have now the honor of communing."

"Mr. Dorrit," returned Mrs. General, "is ever but too obliging, ever but too appreciative. If there have been moments when I have imagined that Miss Dorrit has indeed resented the favorable opinion Mr. Dorrit has formed of my services, I have found, in that only too high opinion, my consolation and recompense."

"Opinion of your services, madam?" said Mr. Dorrit.

"Of," Mrs. General repeated, in an elegantly impressive manner, "my services."

"Of your services alone, dear madam?" said Mr. Dorrit.

"I presume," retorted Mrs. General, in her former impressive manner, "of my services alone. For, to what else," said Mrs. General, with a slightly interrogative action of her gloves, "could I impute—?"

"To—ha—yourself, Mrs. General. Ha hum. To yourself and your merits," was Mr. Dorrit's rejoinder.

"Mr. Dorrit will pardon me," said Mrs. General, "if I remark that this is not a time or place for the pursuit of the present conversation. Mr. Dorrit will excuse me if I remind him that Miss Dorrit is in the adjoining room, and is visible to myself while I utter her name. Mr. Dorrit will forgive me if I observe that I am agitated, and that I find there are moments when weaknesses I supposed myself to have subdued, return with redoubled power. Mr. Dorrit will allow me to withdraw."

"Hum. Perhaps we may resume this—ha—interesting conversation," said Mr. Dorrit, "at another time; unless it should be, what I hope it is not—hum—in any way disagreeable to—ha—Mrs. General."

"Mr. Dorrit," said Mrs. General, casting down her eyes as she rose with a bend, "must ever claim my homage and obedience."

Mrs. General then took herself off in a stately way, and not with that amount of trepidation upon her which might have been expected in a less remarkable woman. Mr. Dorrit, who had conducted his part of the dialogue with a certain majestic and admiring condescension—much as some people may be seen to conduct themselves in Church, and to perform their part in the Service—appeared, on the whole, very well satisfied with himself and with Mrs. General too. On the return of that lady to tea, she had touched herself up with a little powder and pomatum, and was not without moral enhancement likewise; the latter showing itself in much sweet patronage of manner towards Miss Dorrit, and in an air of as tender interest in Mr. Dorrit as was consistent with rigid propriety. At the close of the evening, when she rose to retire, Mr. Dorrit took her by the hand, as if he were going to lead her out into the Piazza of the People to walk a minuet by moonlight, and with great solemnity conducted her to the room door, where he raised her knuckles to his lips. Having parted from her with what may be conjectured to have been a rather bony kiss, of a cosmetic flavor, he gave his daughter his blessing, graciously. And having thus hinted that there was something remarkable in the wind, he again went to bed.

He remained in the seclusion of his own chamber next morning; but, early in the afternoon, sent down his best compliments to Mrs. General, by Mr. Tinkler, and begged she would accompany Miss Dorrit on an airing without him. His daughter was dressed for Mrs. Merdle's dinner before he appeared. He then presented himself, in a resplendent condition as to his attire, but looking indefinitely shrunken and old. However, as he was plainly determined to be angry with her if she so much as asked him how he was, she only ventured to kiss his cheek, before accompanying him to Mrs. Merdle's with an anxious heart.

The distance that they had to go was very short, but he was at his building work again before the carriage had half traversed it. Mrs. Merdle received him with great distinction; the bosom was in admirable preservation, and on the best terms with itself; the dinner was very choice; and the company was very select.

It was principally English; saving that it comprised the usual French Count and the usual Italian Marchese—decorative social milestones, always to be found in certain places, and varying very little in appearance. The table was long, and the dinner was long; and Little Dorrit, overshadowed by a large pair of black whiskers and a large white cravat, lost sight of her father altogether, until a servant put a scrap of paper in her hand, with a whispered request from Mrs. Merdle that she would read it directly. Mrs. Merdle had written on it in pencil, "Pray come and speak to Mr. Dorrit. I doubt if he is well."

She was hurrying to him, unobserved, when he got up out of his

chair, and leaning over the table called to her, supposing her to be still in her place :

“Amy, Amy, my child!”

The action was so unusual, to say nothing of his strange eager appearance and strange eager voice, that it instantaneously caused a profound silence.

“Amy, my dear,” he repeated. “Will you go and see if Bob is on the lock!”

She was at his side, and touching him, but he still perversely supposed her to be in her seat, and called out, still leaning over the table, “Amy, Amy. I don’t feel quite myself. Ha. I don’t know what’s the matter with me. I particularly wish to see Bob. Ha. Of all the turnkeys, he’s as much my friend as yours. See if Bob is in the lodge, and beg him to come to me.”

All the guests were now in consternation, and everybody rose.

“Dear father, I am not there; I am here, by you.”

“Oh! You are here, Amy! Good. Hum. Good. Ha. Call Bob. If he has been relieved, and is not on the lock, tell Mrs. Bangham to go and fetch him.”

She was gently trying to get him away; but he resisted, and would not go.

“I tell you, child,” he said petulantly, “I can’t be got up the narrow stairs without Bob. Ha. Send for Bob. Hum. Send for Bob—best of all the turnkeys—send for Bob!”

He looked confusedly about him, and, becoming conscious of the number of faces by which he was surrounded, addressed them :

“Ladies and gentlemen, the duty—ha—devolves upon me of—hum—welcoming you to the Marshalsea. Welcome to the Marshalsea! The space is—ha—limited—limited—the parade might be wider; but you will find it apparently grow larger after a time—a time, ladies and gentlemen—and the air is, all things considered, very good. It blows over the—ha—Surrey hills. Blows over the Surrey hills. This is the Snuggery. Hum. Supported by a small subscription of the—ha—Collegiate body. In return for which—hot water—general kitchen—and little domestic advantages. Those who are habituated to the—ha—Marshalsea, are pleased to call me its Father. I am accustomed to be complimented by strangers as the—ha—Father of the Marshalsea. Certainly, if years of residence may establish a claim to so—ha—honorable a title, I may accept the—hum—conferred distinction. My child, ladies and gentlemen. My daughter. Born here!”

She was not ashamed of it, or ashamed of him. She was pale and frightened; but she had no other care than to soothe him and get him away, for his own dear sake. She was between him and the wondering faces, turned round upon his breast with her own face raised to his. He held her clasped in his left arm, and between whiles her low voice was heard tenderly imploring him to go away with her.

“Born here,” he repeated, shedding tears. “Bred here. Ladies and gentlemen, my daughter. Child of an unfortunate father, but—ha—always a gentleman. Poor, no doubt, but—hum—proud. Always proud. It has become a—hum—not infrequent custom for my—ha—personal admirers—personal admirers solely—to

be pleased to express their desire to acknowledge my semi-official position here, by offering—ha—little tributes, which usually take the form of—ha—Testimonials—pecuniary Testimonials. In the acceptance of those—ha—voluntary recognitions of my humble endeavours to—hum—to uphold a Tone here—a Tone—I beg it to be understood that I do not consider myself compromised. Ha. Not compromised. Ha. Not a beggar. No; I repudiate the title! At the same time far be it from me to—hum—to put upon the fine feelings by which my partial friends are actuated, the slight of scrupling to admit that those offerings are—hum—highly acceptable. On the contrary, they are most acceptable. In my child's name, if not in my own, I make the admission in the fullest manner, at the same time reserving—ha—shall I say my personal dignity? Ladies and gentlemen, God bless you all!"

By this time, the exceeding mortification undergone by the Bosom had occasioned the withdrawal of the greater part of the company into other rooms. The few who had lingered thus long followed the rest, and Little Dorrit and her father were left to the servants and themselves. Dearest and most precious to her, he would come with her now, would he not? He replied to her fervid entreaties, that he would never be able to get up the narrow stairs without Bob, where was Bob, would nobody fetch Bob! Under pretence of looking for Bob, she got him out against the stream of gay company now pouring in for the evening assembly, and got him into a coach that had just set down its load, and got him home.

The broad stairs of his Roman palace were contracted in his failing sight to the narrow stairs of his London prison; and he would suffer no one but her to touch him, his brother excepted. They got him up to his room without help, and laid him down on his bed. And from that hour his poor maimed spirit, only remembering the place where it had broken its wings, cancelled the dream through which it had since groped, and knew of nothing beyond the Marshalsea. When he heard footsteps in the street, he took them for the old weary tread in the yards. When the hour came for locking up, he supposed all strangers to be excluded for the night. When the time for opening came again, he was so anxious to see Bob that they were fain to patch up a narrative how that Bob—many a year dead then, gentle turnkey—had taken cold, but hoped to be out to-morrow, or the next day, or the next at furthest.

He fell away into a weakness so extreme that he could not raise his hand. But, he still protected his brother according to his long usage; and would say with some complacency, fifty times a day, when he saw him standing by his bed, "My good Frederick, sit down. You are very feeble indeed."

They tried him with Mrs. General, but he had not the faintest knowledge of her. Some injurious suspicion lodged itself in his brain, that she wanted to supplant Mrs. Bangham, and that she was given to drinking. He charged her with it in no measured terms; and was so urgent with his daughter to go round to the Marshal and entreat him to turn her out, that she was never reproduced after the first failure.

Saving that he once asked "if Tip had gone outside?" the remembrance of his two children not present, seemed to have departed

from him. But, the child who had done so much for him and had been so poorly repaid, was never out of his mind. Not that he spared her, or was fearful of her being spent by watching and fatigue; he was not more troubled on that score than he had usually been. No; he loved her in his old way. They were in the jail again, and she tended him, and he had constant need of her, and could not turn without her; and he even told her, sometimes, that he was content to have undergone a great deal for her sake. As to her, she bent over his bed with her quiet face against his, and would have laid down her own life to restore him.

When he had been sinking in this painless way for two or three days, she observed him to be troubled by the ticking of his watch—a pompous gold watch that made as great a to-do about its going, as if nothing else went but itself and Time. She suffered it to run down; but he was still uneasy, and showed that was not what he wanted. At length he roused himself to explain that he wanted money to be raised on this watch. He was quite pleased when she pretended to take it away for the purpose, and afterwards had a relish for his little tastes of wine and jelly, that he had not had before.

He soon made it plain that this was so; for, in another day or two he sent off his sleeve-buttons and finger-rings. He had an amazing satisfaction in entrusting her with these errands, and appeared to consider it equivalent to making the most methodical and provident arrangements. After his trinkets, or such of them as he had been able to see about him, were gone, his clothes engaged his attention; and it is as likely as not that he was kept alive for some days by the satisfaction of sending them, piece by piece, to an imaginary pawnbroker's.

Thus for ten days Little Dorrit bent over his pillow, laying her check against his. Sometimes she was so worn out that for a few minutes they would slumber together. Then she would awake; to recollect with fast-flowing silent tears what it was that touched her face, and to see, stealing over the cherished face upon the pillow, a deeper shadow than the shadow of the Marshalsea Wall.

Quietly, quietly, all the lines of the plan of the great Castle melted, one after another. Quietly, quietly, the ruled and cross-ruled countenance on which they were traced, became fair and blank. Quietly, quietly, the reflected marks of the prison bars and of the zig-zag iron on the wall-top, faded away. Quietly, quietly, the face subsided into a far younger likeness of her own than she had ever seen under the grey hair, and sank to rest.

At first her uncle was stark distracted. “O my brother! O William, William! You to go before me; you to go alone; you to go, and I to remain! You, so far superior, so distinguished, so noble; I, a poor useless creature fit for nothing, and whom no one would have missed!”

It did her, for the time, the good of having him to think of, and to succour. “Uncle, dear Uncle, spare yourself, spare me!”

The old man was not-deaf to the last words. When he did begin to restrain himself, it was that he might spare her. He had no care

for himself; but, with all the remaining power of the honest heart, stunned so long and now awaking to be broken, he honored and blessed her.

"O God," he cried, before they left the room, with his wrinkled hands clasped over her. "Thou seest this daughter of my dear dead brother! All that I have looked upon, with my half-blind and sinful eyes, Thou hast discerned clearly, brightly. Not a hair of her head shall be harmed before Thee. Thou wilt uphold her here, to her last hour. And I know Thou wilt reward her hereafter!"

They remained in a dim room near, until it was almost midnight, quiet and sad together. At times his grief would seek relief, in a burst like that in which it had found its earliest expression; but, besides that his little strength would soon have been unequal to such strains, he never failed to recall her words, and to reproach himself and calm himself. The only utterance with which he indulged his sorrow, was the frequent exclamation that his brother was gone, alone; that they had been together in the outset of their lives, that they had fallen into misfortune together, that they had kept together through their many years of poverty, that they had remained together to that day; and that his brother was gone alone, alone!

They parted, heavy, and sorrowful. She would not consent to leave him anywhere but in his own room, and she saw him lie down in his clothes upon his bed, and covered him with her own hands. Then she sank upon her own bed, and fell into a deep sleep: the sleep of exhaustion and rest, though not of complete release from a pervading consciousness of affliction. Sleep, good Little Dorrit. Sleep through the night!

It was a moonlight night; but, the moon rose late, being long past the full. When it was high in the peaceful firmament, it shone through half-closed lattice blinds into the solemn room where the stumblings and wanderings of a life had so lately ended. Two quiet figures were within the room; two figures, equally still and impassive, equally removed by an untraversable distance from the teeming earth and all that it contains, though soon to lie in it.

One figure reposed upon the bed. The other, kneeling on the floor, drooped over it; the arms easily and peacefully resting on the coverlet; the face bowed down, so that the lips touched the hand over which with its last breath it had bent. The two brothers were before their Father; far beyond the twilight judgments of this world; high above its mists and obscurities.

## CHAPTER XX.

INTRODUCES THE NEXT.

THE passengers were landing from the packet on the pier at Calais. A low-lying place and a low-spirited place Calais was, with the tide ebbing out towards low water-mark. There had been no more water on the bar than had sufficed to float the packet in; and now the bar itself, with a shallow break of sea over it, looked like a lazy marine monster just risen to the surface, whose form was indistinctly shown as it lay asleep. The meagre lighthouse all in white, haunting the sea-board, as if it were the ghost of an edifice that had once had color and rotundity, dripped melancholy tears after its late buffeting by the waves. The long rows of gaunt black piles, slimy and wet and weather-worn, with funeral garlands of sea-weed twisted about them by the late tide, might have represented an unsightly marine cemetery. Every wave-dashed, storm-beaten object, was so low and so little, under the broad grey sky, in the noise of the wind and sea, and before the curling lines of surf, making at it ferociously, that the wonder was there was any Calais left, and that its low gates and low wall and low roofs and low ditches and low sand-hills and low ramparts and flat streets, had not yielded long ago to the undermining and besieging sea, like the fortifications children make on the sea-shore.

After slipping among oozy piles and planks, stumbling up wet steps, and encountering many salt difficulties, the passengers entered on their comfortless peregrination along the pier; where all the French vagabonds and English outlaws in the town (half the population) attended to prevent their recovery from bewilderment. After being minutely inspected by all the English, and claimed and reclaimed and counter-claimed as prizes by all the French, in a hand-to-hand scuffle three quarters of a mile long, they were at last free to enter the streets, and to make off in their various directions, hotly pursued.

Clennam, harassed by more anxieties than one, was among this devoted band. Having rescued the most defenceless of his compatriots from situations of great extremity, he now went his way alone; or as nearly alone as he could be, with a native gentleman in a suit of grease and a cap of the same material, giving chase at a distance of some fifty yards, and continually calling after him "Hi! Ice-say! You! Seer! Ice-say! Nice Oatel!"

Even this hospitable person, however, was left behind at last, and Clennam pursued his way, unmolested. There was a tranquil air in the town after the turbulence of the Channel and the beach, and its dulness in that comparison was agreeable. He met new groups of his countrymen, who had all a straggling air of having at one time over-blown themselves, like certain uncomfortable kinds of flowers, and of being, now, mere weeds. They had all an air, too, of loung-

ing out a limited round, day after day, which strongly reminded him of the Marshalsea. But, taking no further note of them than was sufficient to give birth to the reflection, he sought out a certain street and number, which he kept in his mind.

"So Pancks said," he murmured to himself, as he stopped before a dull house answering to the address. "I suppose his information to be correct and his discovery, among Mr. Casby's loose papers, indisputable; but, without it, I should hardly have supposed this to be a likely place."

A dead sort of house, with a dead wall over the way and a dead gateway at the side, where a pendant bell-handle produced two dead tinkles, and a knocker produced a dead flat surface-tapping that seemed not to have depth enough in it to penetrate even the cracked door. However, the door jarred open on a dead sort of spring; and he closed it behind him as he entered a dull yard, soon brought to a close at the back by another dead wall, where an attempt had been made to train some creeping shrubs, which were dead; and to make a little fountain in a grotto, which was dry; and to decorate that with a little statue, which was gone.

The entry to the house was on the left, and it was garnished, as the outer gateway was, with two printed bills in French and English, announcing Furnished Apartments to let, with immediate possession. A strong cheerful peasant woman, all stocking, petticoat, white cap, and ear-ring, stood here in a dark doorway, and said with a pleasant show of teeth, "Ice-say! Seer! Who?"

Clennam, replying in French, said the English lady; he wished to see the English lady. "Enter then and ascend, if you please," returned the peasant woman, in French likewise. He did both, and followed her up a dark bare staircase to a back room on the first floor. Hence, there was a gloomy view of the yard that was dull, and of the shrubs that were dead, and of the fountain that was dry, and of the pedestal of the statue that was gone.

"Monsieur Blandois," said Clennam.

"With pleasure, Monsieur."

Thereupon the woman withdrew, and left him to look at the room. It was the pattern of room always to be found in such a house. Cool, dull, and dark. Waxed floor, very slippery. A room not large enough to skait in; not adapted to the easy pursuit of any other occupation. Red and white curtained windows, little straw mat, little round table with a tumultuous assemblage of legs underneath, clumsy rush-bottomed chairs, two great red velvet armchairs affording plenty of space to be uncomfortable in, bureau, chimney-glass in several pieces pretending to be in one piece, pair of gaudy vases of very artificial flowers; between them a Greek warrior with his helmet off, sacrificing a clock to the Genius of France.

After some pause, a door of communication with another room was opened, and a lady entered. She manifested great surprise on seeing Clennam, and her glance went round the room in search of some one else.

"Pardon me, Miss Wade. I am alone."

"It was not your name that was brought to me."

"No; I know that. Excuse me. I have already had experience that my name does not predispose you to an interview; and I ventured to mention the name of one I am in search of."

"Pray," she returned, motioning him to a chair so coldly, that he remained standing, "what name was it that you gave?"

"I mentioned the name of Blandois."

"Blandois?"

"A name you are acquainted with."

"It is strange," she said, frowning, "that you should still press an undesired interest in me and my acquaintances, in me and my affairs, Mr. Clennam. I don't know what you mean."

"Pardon me. You know the name?"

"What can you have to do with the name? What can I have to do with the name? What can you have to do with my knowing or not knowing any name? I know many names and I have forgotten many more. This may be in the one class, or it may be in the other, or I may never have heard it. I am acquainted with no reason for examining myself, or for being examined, about it."

"If you will allow me," said Clennam, "I will tell you my reason for pressing the subject. I admit that I do press it, and I must beg you to forgive me if I do so, very earnestly. The reason is all mine. I do not insinuate that it is in any way yours."

"Well, sir," she returned, repeating, a little less haughtily than before, her former invitation to him to be seated: to which he now deferred, as she seated herself. "I am at least glad to know that this is not another bondswoman of some friend of yours, who is bereft of free choice, and whom I have spirited away. I will hear your reason, if you please."

"First, to identify the person of whom we speak," said Clennam, "let me observe that it is the person you met in London some time back. You will remember meeting him near the river—in the Adelphi?"

"You mix yourself most unaccountably with my business," she replied, looking full at him with stern displeasure. "How do you know that?"

"I entreat you not to take it ill. By mere accident."

"What accident?"

"Solely, the accident of coming upon you in the street and seeing the meeting."

"Do you speak of yourself, or of some one else?"

"Of myself. I saw it."

"To be sure it was in the open street," she observed, after a few moments of less and less angry reflection. "Fifty people might have seen it. It would have signified nothing if they had."

"Nor do I make my having seen it of any moment, nor (otherwise than as an explanation of my coming here) do I connect my visit with it, or the favor that I have to ask."

"Oh! You have to ask a favor! It occurred to me," and the handsome face looked bitterly at him, "that your manner was softened, Mr. Clennam."

He was content to protest against this by a slight action without

contesting it in words. He then referred to Blandois' disappearance, of which it was probable she had heard? No. However probable it was to him, she had heard of no such thing. Let him look round him (she said), and judge for himself what general intelligence was likely to reach the ears of a woman who had been shut up there while it was ripe, devouring her own heart. When she had uttered this denial, which he believed to be true, she asked him what he meant by disappearance? That led to his narrating the circumstances in detail, and expressing something of his anxiety to discover what had really become of the man, and to repel the dark suspicions that clouded about his mother's house. She heard him with evident surprise, and with more marks of suppressed interest than he had before seen in her; still they did not overcome her distant, proud, and self-secluded manner. When he had finished, she said nothing but these words:

"You have not yet told me, sir, what I have to do with it, or what the favor is. Will you be so good as come to that?"

"I assume," said Arthur, persevering in his endeavour to soften her scornful demeanour, "that being in communication—may I say, confidential communication?—with this person—"

"You may say, of course, whatever you like," she remarked; "but I do not subscribe to your assumptions, Mr. Clennam, or to any one's."

"—that being, at least, in personal communication with him," said Clennam, changing the form of his position, in the hope of making it unobjectionable, "you can tell me something of his antecedents, pursuits, habits, usual place of residence. Can give me some little clue by which to seek him out in the likeliest manner, and either produce him, or establish what has become of him. This is the favor I ask, and I ask it in a distress of mind for which I hope you will feel some consideration. If you should have any reason for imposing conditions upon me, I will respect it without asking what it is."

"You chanced to see me in the street with the man," she observed, after being, to his mortification, evidently more occupied with her own reflections on the matter than with his appeal. "Then you knew the man before?"

"Not before; afterwards. I never saw him before, but I saw him again on this very night of his disappearance. In my mother's room, in fact. I left him there. You will read in this paper all that is known of him."

He handed her one of the printed bills, which she read with a steady and attentive face.

"This is more than *I* knew of him," she said, giving it back.

Clennam's looks expressed his heavy disappointment, perhaps his incredulity; for, she added in the same unsympathetic tone: "You don't believe it. Still, it is so. As to personal communication; it seems that there was personal communication between him and your mother. And yet you say you believe *her* declaration that she knows no more of him!"

A sufficiently expressive hint of suspicion was conveyed in these words, and in the smile by which they were accompanied, to bring the blood into Clennam's cheeks.

"Come, sir," she said, with a cruel pleasure in repeating the stab, "I will be as open with you as you can desire. I will confess that if I cared for my credit (which I do not), or had a good name to preserve (which I have not, for I am utterly indifferent to its being considered good or bad), I should regard myself as heavily compromised by having had anything to do with this fellow. Yet he never passed in at *my* door—never sat in colloquy with *me* until midnight."

She took her revenge for her old grudge in thus turning his subject against him. Her's was not the nature to spare him, and she had no compunction.

"That he is a low, mercenary wretch; that I first saw him prowling about Italy (where I was, not long ago), and that I hired him there, as the suitable instrument of a purpose I happened to have; I have no objection to tell you. In short, it was worth my while, for my own pleasure—the gratification of a strong feeling—to pay a spy who would fetch and carry for money. I paid this creature. And I dare say that if I had wanted to make such a bargain, and if I could have paid him enough, and if he could have done it in the dark, free from all risk, he would have taken any life with as little scruple as he took my money. That, at least, is my opinion of him; and I see it is not very far removed from yours. Your mother's opinion of him, I am to assume (following your example of assuming this and that), was vastly different."

"My mother, let me remind you," said Clennam, "was first brought into communication with him in the unlucky course of business."

"It appears to have been an unlucky course of business that last brought her into communication with him," returned Miss Wade; "and business hours on that occasion were late."

"You imply," said Arthur, smarting under these cool-handed thrusts, of which he had deeply felt the force already, "that there was something—"

"Mr. Clennam," she composedly interrupted, "recollect that I do not speak by implication about the man. He is, I say again without disguise, a low mercenary wretch. I suppose such a creature goes where there is occasion for him. If I had not had occasion for him, you would not have seen him and me together."

Wrung by her persistence in keeping that dark side of the case before him, of which there was a half-hidden shadow in his own breast, Clennam was silent.

"I have spoken of him as still living," she added, "but he may have been put out of the way for anything I know. For anything I care, also. I have no further occasion for him."

With a heavy sigh and a despondent air, Arthur Clennam slowly rose. She did not rise also, but said, having looked at him in the meanwhile with a fixed look of suspicion, and lips angrily compressed :

"He was the chosen associate of your dear friend, Mr. Gowan, was he not? Why don't you ask your dear friend to help you?"

The denial that he was a dear friend rose to Arthur's lips; but, he repressed it, remembering his old struggles and resolutions, and said :

"Further than that he has never seen Blandois since Blandois set out for England, Mr. Gowan knows nothing additional about him. He was a chance acquaintance, made abroad."

"A chance acquaintance, made abroad!" she repeated. "Yes. Your dear friend has need to divert himself with all the acquaintances he can make, seeing what a wife he has. I hate his wife, sir."

The anger with which she said it, the more remarkable for being so much under her restraint, fixed Clennam's attention, and kept him on the spot. It flashed out of her dark eyes as they regarded him, quivered in her nostrils, and fired the very breath she exhaled; but her face was otherwise composed into a disdainful serenity, and her attitude was as calmly and haughtily graceful as if she had been in a mood of complete indifference.

"All I will say is, Miss Wade," he remarked, "that you can have received no provocation to a feeling in which I believe you have no sharer."

"You may ask your dear friend, if you choose," she returned, "for his opinion upon that subject."

"I am scarcely on those intimate terms with my dear friend," said Arthur, in spite of his resolutions, "that would render my approaching the subject very probable, Miss Wade."

"I hate him," she returned. "Worse than his wife, because I was once dupe enough, and false enough to myself, almost to love him. You have seen me, sir, only on common-place occasions, when I dare say you have thought me a common-place woman, a little more self-willed than the generality. You don't know what I mean by hating, if you know me no better than that; you can't know, without knowing with what care I have studied myself, and people about me. For this reason I have for some time inclined to tell you what my life has been—not to propitiate your opinion, for I set no value on it; but, that you may comprehend, when you think of your dear friend and his dear wife, what I mean by hating. Shall I give you something I have written and put by for your perusal, or shall I hold my hand?"

Arthur begged her to give it to him. She went to the bureau, unlocked it, and took from an inner drawer a few folded sheets of paper. Without any conciliation of him, scarcely addressing him, rather speaking as if she were speaking to her own looking-glass for the justification of her own stubbornness, she said, as she gave them to him:

"Now you may know what I mean by hating! No more of that. Sir, whether you find me temporarily and cheaply lodging in an empty London house or in a Calais apartment, you find Harriet with me. You may like to see her before you leave. Harriet, come in!" She called Harriet again. The second call produced Harriet, once Tattyoram.

"Here is Mr. Clennam," said Miss Wade; "not come for you; he has given you up.—I suppose you have, by this time?"

"Having no authority or influence—yes," assented Clennam.

"Not come in search of you, you see; but still seeking some one. He wants that Blandois man."

"With whom I saw you in the Strand in London," hinted Arthur.

"If you know anything of him, Harriet, except that he came from Venice—which we all know—tell it to Mr. Clennam freely."

"I know nothing more about him," said the girl.

"Are you satisfied?" Miss Wade enquired of Arthur.

He had no reason to disbelieve them; the girl's manner being so natural as to be almost convincing, if he had had any previous doubts. He replied, "I must seek for intelligence elsewhere."

He was not going in the same breath; but, he had risen before the girl entered, and she evidently thought he was. She looked quickly at him, and said:

"Are they well, sir?"

"Who?"

She stopped herself in saying what would have been "all of them;" glanced at Miss Wade; and said "Mr. and Mrs. Meagles."

"They were, when I last heard of them. They are not at home. By the way, let me ask you. Is it true that you were seen there?"

"Where? Where does any one say I was seen?" returned the girl, sullenly casting down her eyes.

"Looking in at the garden gate of the cottage?"

"No," said Miss Wade. "She has never been near it."

"You are wrong, then," said the girl. "I went down there, the last time we were in London. I went one afternoon when you left me alone. And I did look in."

"You poor-spirited girl," returned Miss Wade with infinite contempt; "does all our companionship, do all our conversations, do all your old complainings, tell for so little as that?"

"There was no harm in looking in at the gate for an instant," said the girl. "I saw by the windows that the family were not there."

"Why should you go near the place?"

"Because I wanted to see it. Because I felt that I should like to look at it again."

As each of the two handsome faces looked at the other, Clennam felt how each of the two natures must be constantly tearing the other to pieces.

"Oh!" said Miss Wade, coldly subduing and removing her glance; "if you had any desire to see the place where you led the life from which I rescued you because you had found out what it was, that is another thing. But, is that your truth to me? Is that your fidelity to me? Is that the common cause I make with you? You are not worth the confidence I have placed in you. You are not worth the favor I have shown you. You are no higher than a spaniel, and had better go back to the people who did worse than whip you."

"If you speak so of them with any one else by to hear, you'll provoke me to take their part," said the girl.

"Go back to them," Miss Wade retorted. "Go back to them."

"You know very well," retorted Harriet in her turn, "that I won't go back to them. You know very well that I have thrown them off, and never can, never shall, never will, go back to them. Let them alone, then, Miss Wade."

"You prefer their plenty to your less fat living here," she rejoined. "You exalt them and slight me. What else should I have expected? I ought to have known it."

"It's not so," said the girl, flushing high, "and you don't say what you mean. I know what you mean. You are reproaching me, under-handed, with having nobody but you to look to. And because I have nobody but you to look to, you think you are to make me do, or not do, everything you please, and are to put any affront upon me. You are as bad as they were, every bit. But I will not be quite tamed and made submissive. I will say again that I went to look at the house, because I had often thought that I should like to see it once more. I will ask again how they are, because I once liked them, and at times thought they were kind to me."

Hereupon Clennam said that he was sure they would still receive her kindly, if she should ever desire to return.

"Never!" said the girl passionately. "I shall never do that. Nobody knows that better than Miss Wade, though she taunts me because she has made me her dependant. And I know I am so; and I know she is overjoyed when she can bring it to my mind."

"A good pretence!" said Miss Wade, with no less anger, haughtiness, and bitterness; "but too threadbare to cover what I plainly see in this. My poverty will not bear competition with their money. Better go back at once, better go back at once, and have done with it!"

Arthur Clennam looked at them, standing a little distance asunder in the dull confined room, each proudly cherishing her own anger; each, with a fixed determination, torturing her own breast, and torturing the other's. He said a word or two of leave-taking; but, Miss Wade barely inclined her head, and Harriet, with the assumed humiliation of an abject dependant and serf (but not without defiance for all that), made as if she were too low to notice or to be noticed.

He came down the dark winding stairs into the yard, with an increased sense upon him of the gloom of the wall that was dead, and of the shrubs that were dead, and of the fountain that was dry, and of the statue that was gone. Pondering much on what he had seen and heard in that house, as well as on the failure of all his efforts to trace the suspicious character who was lost, he returned to London and to England by the packet that had taken him over. On the way, he unfolded the sheets of paper, and read in them what is reproduced in the next chapter.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE HISTORY OF A SELF TORMENTOR.

I HAVE the misfortune of not being a fool. From a very early age I have detected what those about me thought they hid from me. If I could have been habitually imposed upon, instead of habitually discerning the truth, I might have lived as smoothly as most fools do.

My childhood was passed with a grandmother; that is to say, with a lady who represented that relative to me, and who took that

title on herself. She had no claim to it, but I—being to that extent a little fool—had no suspicion of her. She had some children of her own family in her house, and some children of other people. All girls; ten in number, including me. We all lived together, and were educated together.

I must have been about twelve years old when I began to see how determinedly those girls patronised me. I was told I was an orphan. There was no other orphan among us; and I perceived (here was the first disadvantage of not being a fool), that they conciliated me in an insolent pity, and in a sense of superiority. I did not set this down as a discovery, rashly. I tried them often. I could hardly make them quarrel with me. When I succeeded with any of them, they were sure to come, after an hour or two, and begin a reconciliation. I tried them over and over again, and I never knew them wait for me to begin. They were always forgiving me, in their vanity and condescension. Little images of grown people!

One of them was my chosen friend. I loved that stupid mite in a passionate way that she could no more deserve, than I can remember without feeling ashamed of, though I was but a child. She had what they called an amiable temper, an affectionate temper. She could distribute, and did distribute, pretty looks and smiles to every one among them. I believe there was not a soul in the place, except myself, who knew that she did it purposely to wound and gall me!

Nevertheless, I so loved that unworthy girl, that my life was made stormy by my fondness for her. I was constantly lectured and disgraced for what was called “trying her;” in other words, charging her with her little perfidy and throwing her into tears by showing her that I read her heart. However, I loved her, faithfully; and one time I went home with her for the holidays.

She was worse at home than she had been at school. She had a crowd of cousins and acquaintances, and we had dances at her house, and went out to dances at other houses, and, both at home and out, she tormented my love beyond endurance. Her plan was, to make them all fond of her—and so drive me wild with jealousy. To be familiar and endearing with them all—and so make me mad with envying them. When we were left alone in our bedroom at night, I would reproach her with my perfect knowledge of her baseness; and then she would cry and cry and say I was cruel, and then I would hold her in my arms till morning: loving her as much as ever, and often feeling as if, rather than suffer so, I could so hold her in my arms and plunge to the bottom of a river—where I would still hold her, after we were both dead.

It came to an end, and I was relieved. In the family, there was an aunt, who was not fond of me. I doubt if any of the family liked me much; but, I never wanted them to like me, being altogether bound up in the one girl. The aunt was a young woman, and she had a serious way with her eyes of watching me. She was an audacious woman, and openly looked compassionately at me. After one of the nights that I have spoken of, I came down into a greenhouse before breakfast. Charlotte (the name of my false young friend) had gone down before me, and I heard this aunt speaking to her about me as I entered. I stopped where I was, among the leaves, and listened.

The aunt said, "Charlotte, Miss Wade is wearing you to death, and this must not continue." I repeat the very words I heard.

Now, what did she answer? Did she say, "It is I who am wearing her to death, I who am keeping her on a rack and am the executioner, yet she tells me every night that she loves me devotedly, though she knows what I make her undergo"? No; my first memorable experience was true to what I knew her to be, and to all my experience. She began sobbing and weeping (to secure the aunt's sympathy to herself), and said "Dear aunt, she has an unhappy temper; other girls at school, besides I, try hard to make it better; we all try hard."

Upon that, the aunt fondled her, as if she had said something noble instead of despicable and false, and kept up the infamous pretence by replying, "But there are reasonable limits, my dear love, to everything, and I see that this poor miserable girl causes you more constant and useless distress than even so good an effort justifies."

The poor miserable girl came out of her concealment, as you may be prepared to hear, and said, "Send me home." I never said another word to either of them, or to any of them, but "Send me home, or I will walk home alone, night and day!" When I got home, I told my supposed grandmother that, unless I was sent away to finish my education somewhere else, before that girl came back, or before any one of them came back, I would burn my sight away by throwing myself into the fire, rather than I would endure to look at their plotting faces.

I went among young women next, and I found them no better. Fair words and fair pretences; but, I penetrated below those assertions of themselves and deprecations of me, and they were no better. Before I left them, I learned that I had no grandmother and no recognised relation. I carried the light of that information both into my past and into my future. It showed me many new occasions on which people triumphed over me, when they made a pretence of treating me with consideration, or doing me a service.

A man of business had a small property in trust for me. I was to be a governess. I became a governess; and went into the family of a poor nobleman, where there were two daughters—little children, but the parents wished them to grow up, if possible, under one instructress. The mother was young and pretty. From the first, she made a show of behaving to me with great delicacy. I kept my resentment to myself; but, I knew very well that it was her way of petting the knowledge that she was my Mistress, and might have behaved differently to her servant if it had been her fancy.

I say I did not resent it, nor did I; but I showed her, by not gratifying her, that I understood her. When she pressed me to take wine, I took water. If there happened to be anything choice at table, she always sent it to me: but, I always declined it, and ate of the rejected dishes. These disappointments of her patronage were a sharp retort, and made me feel independent.

I liked the children. They were timid, but on the whole disposed to attach themselves to me. There was a nurse, however, in the house, a rosy-faced woman always making an obtrusive pretence of being gay and good-humored, who had nursed them both,

and who had secured their affections before I saw them. I could almost have settled down to my fate but for this woman. Her artful devices for keeping herself before the children in constant competition with me, might have blinded many in my place; but, I saw through them from the first. On the pretext of arranging my rooms and waiting on me and taking care of my wardrobe (all of which she did, busily), she was never absent. The most crafty of her many subtleties was her feint of seeking to make the children fonder of me. She would lead them to me, and coax them to me. "Come to good Miss Wade, come to dear Miss Wade, come to pretty Miss Wade. She loves you very much. Miss Wade is a clever lady, who has read heaps of books, and can tell you far better and more interesting stories than I know. Come and hear Miss Wade!" How could I engage their attention, when my heart was burning against these ignorant designs? How could I wonder, when I saw their innocent faces shrinking away, and their arms twining round her neck, instead of mine? Then she would look up at me, shaking their curls from her face, and say, "They'll come round soon, Miss Wade; they're very simple and loving, ma'am; don't be at all cast down about it, ma'am"—exulting over me!

There was another thing the woman did. At times, when she saw that she had safely plunged me into a black despondent brooding, by these means, she would call the attention of the children to it, and would show them the difference between herself and me. "Hush! Poor Miss Wade is not well. Don't make a noise, my dears, her head aches. Come and comfort her. Come and ask her if she is better; come and ask her to lie down. I hope you have nothing on your mind, ma'am. Don't take on, ma'am, and be sorry!"

It became intolerable. Her ladyship my Mistress coming in one day when I was alone, and at the height of feeling that I could support it no longer, I told her I must go. I could not bear the presence of that woman Dawes.

"Miss Wade! Poor Dawes is devoted to you; would do anything for you!"

I knew beforehand she would say so; I was quite prepared for it; I only answered, it was not for me to contradict my Mistress; I must go.

"I hope, Miss Wade," she returned, instantly assuming the tone of superiority she had always so thinly concealed, "that nothing I have ever said or done since we have been together, has justified your use of that disagreeable word, Mistress. It must have been wholly inadvertent on my part. Pray tell me what it is."

I replied that I had no complaint to make, either of my Mistress or to my Mistress; but, I must go.

She hesitated a moment, and then sat down beside me, and laid her hand on mine. As if that honor would obliterate any remembrance!

"Miss Wade, I fear you are unhappy, through causes over which I have no influence."

I smiled, thinking of the experience the word awakened, and said, "I have an unhappy temper, I suppose."

"I did not say that."

"It is an easy way of accounting for anything," said I.

"It may be; but I did not say so. What I wish to approach, is something very different. My husband and I have exchanged some remarks upon the subject, when we have observed with pain that you have not been easy with us."

"Easy? Oh! You are such great people, my lady," said I.

"I am unfortunate in using a word which may convey a meaning—and evidently does—quite opposite to my intention." (She had not expected my reply, and it shamed her.) "I only mean, not happy with us. It is a difficult topic to enter on; but, from one young woman to another, perhaps—in short, we have been apprehensive that you may allow some family circumstances of which no one can be more innocent than yourself, to prey upon your spirits. If so, let us entreat you not to make them a cause of grief. My husband himself, as is well known, formerly had a very dear sister who was not in law his sister, but who was universally beloved and respected—"

I saw directly, that they had taken me in, for the sake of the dead woman, whoever she was, and to have that boast of me and advantage of me; I saw, in the nurse's knowledge of it, an encouragement to goad me as she had done; and I saw, in the children's shrinking away, a vague impression that I was not like other people. I left that house that night.

After one or two short and very similar experiences, which are not to the present purpose, I entered another family where I had but one pupil: a girl of fifteen, who was the only daughter. The parents here were elderly people: people of station and rich. A nephew whom they had brought up, was a frequent visitor at the house, among many other visitors; and he began to pay me attention. I was resolute in repulsing him; for, I had determined when I went there, that no one should pity me or condescend to me. But, he wrote me a letter. It led to our being engaged to be married.

He was a year younger than I, and young-looking even when that allowance was made. He was on absence from India, where he had a post that was soon to grow into a very good one. In six months we were to be married, and were to go to India. I was to stay in the house, and was to be married from the house. Nobody objected to any part of the plan.

I cannot avoid saying, he admired me; but, if I could, I would. Vanity has nothing to do with the declaration, for, his admiration worried me. He took no pains to hide it; and caused me to feel among the rich people as if he had bought me for my looks, and made a show of his purchase to justify himself. They appraised me in their own minds, I saw, and were curious to ascertain what my full value was. I resolved that they should not know. I was immovable and silent before them; and would have suffered any one of them to kill me, sooner than I would have laid myself out to bespeak their approval.

He told me I did not do myself justice. I told him I did, and it was because I did and meant to do so to the last, that I would not stoop to propitiate any of them. He was concerned and even shocked, when I added that I wished he would not parade his attachment before

them; but, he said he would sacrifice even the honest impulses of his affection to my peace.

Under that pretence, he began to retort upon me. By the hour together, he would keep at a distance from me, talking to any one rather than to me. I have sat alone and unnoticed, half an evening, while he conversed with his young cousin, my pupil. I have seen all the while, in people's eyes, that they thought the two looked nearer on an equality than he and I. I have sat, divining their thoughts, until I have felt that his young appearance made me ridiculous, and have raged against myself for ever loving him.

For, I did love him once. Undeserving as he was, and little as he thought of all these agonies that it cost me—agonies which should have made him wholly and gratefully mine to his life's end—I loved him. I bore with his cousin's praising him to my face, and with her pretending to think that it pleased me, but full well knowing that it rankled in my breast; for his sake. While I have sat in his presence recalling all my slights and wrongs, and deliberating whether I should not fly from the house at once and never see him again—I have loved him.

His aunt (my Mistress you will please to remember) deliberately, wilfully, added to my trials and vexations. It was her delight to expatriate on the style in which we were to live in India, and on the establishment we should keep, and the company we should entertain, when he got his advancement. My pride rose against this barefaced way of pointing out the contrast my married life was to present to my then dependent and inferior position. I suppressed my indignation; but, I showed her that her intention was not lost upon me, and I repaid her annoyances by affecting humility. What she described, would surely be a great deal too much honor for me, I would tell her. I was afraid I might not be able to support so great a change. Think of a mere governess, her daughter's governess, coming to that high distinction! It made her uneasy and made them all uneasy, when I answered in this way. They knew that I fully understood her.

It was at the time when my troubles were at their highest, and when I was most incensed against my lover for his ingratitude in caring as little as he did for the innumerable distresses and mortifications I underwent on his account, that your dear friend, Mr. Gowan, appeared at the house. He had been intimate there for a long time, but had been abroad. He understood the state of things at a glance, and he understood me.

He was the first person I had ever seen in my life who had understood me. He was not in the house three times before I knew that he accompanied every movement of my mind. In his coldly easy way with all of them, and with me, and with the whole subject, I saw it clearly. In his light protestations of admiration of my future husband, in his enthusiasm regarding our engagement and our prospects, in his hopeful congratulations on our future wealth and his despondent references to his own poverty—all equally hollow, and jesting, and full of mockery—I saw it clearly. He made me feel more and more resentful, and more and more contemptible, by always presenting to me everything that surrounded me, with some new hateful light upon it, while he pretended to exhibit it in its best aspect for my admiration.

and his own. He was like the dressed-up Death in the Dutch series; whatever figure he took upon his arm, whether it was youth or age, beauty or ugliness, whether he danced with it, sang with it, played with it, or prayed with it, he made it ghastly.

You will understand, then, that when your dear friend complimented me, he really condoled with me; that when he soothed me under my vexations, he laid bare every smarting wound I had; that when he declared my "faithful swain" to be "the most loving young fellow in the world, with the tenderest heart that ever beat," he touched my old misgiving that I was made ridiculous. These were not great services, you may say. They were acceptable to me, because they echoed my own mind, and confirmed my own knowledge. I soon began to like the society of your dear friend, better than any other.

When I perceived (which I did, almost as soon) that jealousy was growing out of this, I liked this society still better. Had I not been subjected to jealousy, and were the endurance to be all mine? No. Let him know what it was! I was delighted that he should know it; I was delighted that he should feel keenly, and I hoped he did. More than that. He was tame in comparison with Mr. Gowan, who knew how to address me on equal terms, and how to anatomise the wretched people around us.

This went on, until the aunt, my Mistress, took it upon herself to speak to me. It was scarcely worth alluding to; she knew I meant nothing; but, she suggested from herself, knowing it was only necessary to suggest, that it might be better, if I were a little less companionable with Mr. Gowan.

I asked her how she could answer for what I meant? She could always answer, she replied, for my meaning nothing wrong. I thanked her, but said I would prefer to answer for myself, and to myself. Her other servants would probably be grateful for good characters, but I wanted none.

Other conversation followed, and induced me to ask her how she knew that it was only necessary for her to make a suggestion to me, to have it obeyed? Did she presume on my birth, or on my hire? I was not bought, body and soul. She seemed to think that her distinguished nephew had gone into a slave-market and purchased a wife.

It would probably have come, sooner or later, to the end to which it did come, but she brought it to its issue at once. She told me, with assumed commiseration, that I had an unhappy temper. On this repetition of the old wicked injury, I withheld no longer, but exposed to her all I had known of her and seen in her, and all I had undergone within myself since I had occupied the despicable position of being engaged to her nephew. I told her that Mr. Gowan was the only relief I had had in my degradation; that I had borne it too long, and that I shook it off too late; but, that I would see none of them more. And I never did.

Your dear friend followed me to my retreat, and was very droll on the severance of the connexion; though he was sorry, too, for the excellent people (in their way the best he had ever met), and deplored the necessity of breaking mere house-flies on the wheel. He protested before long, and far more truly than I then supposed, that he

was not worth acceptance by a woman of such endowments, and such power of character; but—well, well!—

Your dear friend amused me and amused himself as long as it suited his inclinations; and then reminded me that we were both people of the world, that we both understood mankind, that we both knew there was no such thing as romance, that we were both prepared for going different ways to seek our fortunes like people of sense, and that we both foresaw that whenever we encountered one another again we should meet as the best friends on earth. So he said, and I did not contradict him.

It was not very long before I found that he was courting his present wife, and that she had been taken away to be out of his reach. I hated her then, quite as much as I hate her now; and naturally, therefore, could desire nothing better than that she should marry him. But, I was restlessly curious to look at her—so curious that I felt it to be one of the few sources of entertainment left to me. I travelled a little: travelled until I found myself in her society, and in yours. Your dear friend, I think, was not known to you then, and had not given you any of those signal marks of his friendship which he has bestowed upon you.

In that company I found a girl, in various circumstances of whose position there was a singular likeness to my own, and in whose character I was interested and pleased to see much of the rising against swollen patronage and selfishness, calling themselves kindness, protection, benevolence, and other fine names, which I have described as inherent in my nature. I often heard it said, too, that she had “an unhappy temper.” Well understanding what was meant by the convenient phrase, and wanting a companion with a knowledge of what I knew, I thought I would try to release the girl from her bondage and sense of injustice. I have no occasion to relate that I succeeded.

We have been together ever since, sharing my small means.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### WHO PASSES BY THIS ROAD SO LATE?

AETHUR CLENNAM had made his unavailing expedition to Calais, in the midst of a great pressure of business. A certain barbaric Power with valuable possessions on the map of the world, had occasion for the services of one or two engineers, quick in invention and determined in execution: practical men, who could make the men and means their ingenuity perceived to be wanted, out of the best materials they could find at hand; and who were as bold and fertile in the adaptation of such materials to their purpose, as in the conception of their purpose itself. This Power, being a barbaric one, had no idea of stowing away a great national object in a Circumlocution Office, as

strong wine is hidden from the light in a cellar, until its fire and youth are gone, and the labourers who worked in the vineyard and pressed the grapes are dust. With characteristic ignorance, it acted on the most decided and energetic notions of How to do it; and never showed the least respect for, or gave any quarter to, the great political science How not to do it. Indeed it had a barbarous way of striking the latter art and mystery dead, in the person of any enlightened subject who practised it.

Accordingly, the men who were wanted, were sought out and found: which was in itself a most uncivilised and irregular way of proceeding. Being found, they were treated with great confidence and honor (which again showed dense political ignorance), and were invited to come at once and do what they had to do. In short, they were regarded as men who meant to do it, engaging with other men who meant it to be done.

Daniel Doyce was one of the chosen. There was no foreseeing at that time whether he would be absent months, or years. The preparations for his departure, and the conscientious arrangement for him of all the details and results of their joint business, had necessitated labor within a short compass of time, which had occupied Clennam day and night. He had slipped across the water in his first leisure, and had slipped as quickly back again for his farewell interview with Doyce.

He Arthur now showed, with pains and care, the state of their gains and losses, responsibilities and prospects. Daniel went through it all in his patient manner, and admired it all exceedingly. He audited the accounts, as if they were a far more ingenious piece of mechanism than he had ever constructed, and afterwards stood looking at them, weighing his hat over his head by the brims, as if he were absorbed in the contemplation of some wonderful engine.

“It’s all beautiful, Clennam, in its regularity and order. Nothing can be plainer. Nothing can be better.”

“I am glad you approve, Doyce. Now, as to the management of our capital while you are away, and as to the conversion of so much of it as the business may need from time to time——” His partner stopped him.

“As to that, and as to everything else of that kind, all rests with you. You will continue in all such matters to act for both of us, as you have done hitherto, and to lighten my mind of a load it is much relieved from.”

“Though, as I often tell you,” returned Clennam, “you unreasonably depreciate your business qualities.”

“Perhaps so,” said Doyce, smiling. “And perhaps not. Anyhow, I have a calling that I have studied more than such matters, and that I am better fitted for. I have perfect confidence in my partner, and I am satisfied that he will do what is best. If I have a prejudice connected with money and money-figures,” continued Doyce, laying that plastic workman’s thumb of his on the lappel of his partner’s coat, “it is against speculating. I don’t think I have any other. I dare say I entertain that prejudice, only because I have never given my mind fully to the subject.”

“But you shouldn’t call it a prejudice,” said Clennam. “My dear Doyce, it is the soundest sense.”

"I am glad you think so," returned Doyce, with his grey eye, looking kind and bright.

"It so happens," said Clennam, "that just now, not half an hour before you came down, I was saying the same thing to Pancks, who looked in here. We both agreed that, to travel out of safe investments, is one of the most dangerous, as it is one of the most common, of those follies which often deserve the name of vices."

"Pancks?" said Doyce, tilting up his hat at the back, and nodding with an air of confidence. "Aye, aye, aye! That's a cautious fellow."

"He is a very cautious fellow indeed," returned Arthur. "Quite a specimen of caution."

They both appeared to derive a larger amount of satisfaction from the cautious character of Mr. Pancks than was quite intelligible, judged by the surface of their conversation.

"And now," said Daniel, looking at his watch, "as time and tide wait for no one, my trusty partner, and as I am ready for starting, bag and baggage, at the gate below, let me say a last word. I want you to grant a request of mine."

"Any request you can make.—Except," Clennam was quick with his exception, for his partner's face was quick in suggesting it, "except that I will abandon your invention."

"That's the request, and you know it is," said Doyce.

"I say, No, then. I say positively, No. Now that I have begun, I will have some definite reason, some responsible statement, something in the nature of a real answer, from those people."

"You will not," returned Doyce, shaking his head. "Take my word for it, you never will."

"At least, I'll try," said Clennam. "It will do me no harm to try."

"I am not certain of that," rejoined Doyce, laying his hand persuasively on his shoulder. "It has done me harm, my friend. It has aged me, tired me, vexed me, disappointed me. It does no man any good to have his patience worn out, and to think himself ill-used. I fancy, even already, that unavailing attendance on delays and evasions has made you something less elastic than you used to be."

"Private anxieties may have done that for the moment," said Clennam, "but not official harrying. Not yet. I am not hurt yet."

"Then you won't grant my request?"

"Decidedly, No," said Clennam. "I should be ashamed if I submitted to be so soon driven out of the field, where a much older and a much more sensitively interested man contended with fortitude so long."

As there was no moving him, Daniel Doyce returned the grasp of his hand, and, casting a farewell look round the counting-house, went down-stairs with him. Doyce was to go to Southampton to join the small staff of his fellow-travellers; and a coach was at the gate, well furnished and packed, and ready to take him there. The workmen were at the gate to see him off, and were mightily proud of him. "Good luck to you, Mr. Doyce!" said one of the number. "Wherever you go, they'll find as they've got a man among 'em, a man as knows his tools and as his tools knows, a man as is willing and a man as

is able, and if that's not a man where is a man!" This oration from a gruff volunteer in the back-ground, not previously suspected of any powers in that way, was received with three loud cheers; and the speaker became a distinguished character for ever afterwards. In the midst of the three loud cheers, Daniel gave them all a hearty "Good Bye, Men!" and the coach disappeared from sight, as if the concussion of the air had blown it out of Bleeding Heart Yard.

Mr. Baptist, as a grateful little fellow in a position of trust, was among the workmen, and had done as much towards the cheering as a mere foreigner could. In truth, no men on earth can cheer like Englishmen, who do so rally one another's blood and spirit when they cheer in earnest, that the stir is like the rush of their whole history, with all its standards waving at once, from Saxon Alfred's downward. Mr. Baptist had been in a manner whirled away before the onset, and was taking his breath in quite a scared condition when Clennam beckoned him to follow up-stairs, and return the books and papers to their places.

In the lull consequent on the departure—in that first vacuity which ensues on every separation, foreshadowing the great separation that is always overhanging all mankind—Arthur stood at his desk, looking dreamily out at a gleam of sun. But, his liberated attention soon reverted to the theme that was foremost in his thoughts, and began, for the hundredth time, to dwell upon every circumstance that had impressed itself upon his mind, on the mysterious night when he had seen the man at his mother's. Again the man jostled him in the crooked street, again he followed the man and lost him, again he came upon the man in the courtyard looking at the house, again he followed the man and stood beside him on the door-steps.

"Who passes by this road so late?  
Compagnon de la Majolaine;  
Who passes by this road so late?  
Always gay!"

It was not the first time, by many, that he had recalled the song of the child's game, of which the fellow had hummed this verse while they stood side by side; but, he was so unconscious of having repeated it audibly, that he started to hear the next verse,

"Of all the king's knights 'tis the flower,  
Compagnon de la Majolaine;  
Of all the king's knights 'tis the flower,  
Always gay!"

Cavalletto had deferentially suggested the words and tune; supposing him to have stopped short for want of more.

"Ah! You know the song, Cavalletto?"

"By Bacchus, yes, sir! They all know it in France. I have heard it many times, sung by the little children. The last time when it I have heard," said Mr. Baptist, formerly Cavalletto, who usually went back to his native construction of sentences when his memory went near

home, "is from a sweet little voice. A little voice, very pretty, very innocent. Altro!"

"The last time I heard it," returned Arthur, "was in a voice quite the reverse of pretty, and quite the reverse of innocent." He said it more to himself than to his companion, and added to himself, repeating the man's next words. "Death of my life, sir, it's my character to be impatient!"

"EH!" cried Cavalletto, astounded, and with all his color gone in a moment.

"What is the matter?"

"Sir! You know where I have heard that song the last time?"

With his rapid native action, his hands made the outline of a high hook nose, pushed his eyes near together, dishevelled his hair, puffed out his upper lip to represent a thick moustache, and threw the heavy end of an ideal cloak over his shoulder. While doing this, with a swiftness incredible to one who has not watched an Italian peasant, he indicated a very remarkable and sinister smile. The whole change passed over him like a flash of light, and he stood in the same instant, pale and astonished, before his patron.

"In the name of Fate and wonder," said Clennam, "what do you mean? Do you know a man of the name of Blandois?"

"No!" said Mr. Baptist, shaking his head.

"You have just now described a man who was by, when you heard that song; have you not?"

"Yes!" said Mr. Baptist, nodding fifty times.

"And was he not called Blandois?"

"No!" said Mr. Baptist. "Altro, Altro, Altro, Altro!" He could not reject the name sufficiently, with his head and his right forefinger going at once.

"Stay!" cried Clennam, spreading out the hand-bill on his desk. "Was this the man? You can understand what I read aloud?"

"Altogether. Perfectly."

"But look at it, too. Come here and look over me, while I read."

Mr. Baptist approached, followed every word with his quick eyes, saw and heard it all out with the greatest impatience, then clapped his two hands flat upon the bill as if he had fiercely caught some noxious creature, and cried, looking eagerly at Clennam, "It is the man! Behold him!"

"This is of far greater moment to me," said Clennam, in great agitation, "than you can imagine. Tell me where you knew the man."

Mr. Baptist, releasing the paper very slowly and with much discomfiture, and drawing himself back two or three paces, and making as though he dusted his hands, returned, very much against his will:

"At Marsiglia—Marseilles."

"What was he?"

"A prisoner, and—Altro! I believe yes!—an," Mr. Baptist crept closer again to whisper it, "Assassin!"

Clennam fell back as if the word had struck him a blow: so terrible did it make his mother's communication with the man appear. Cavalletto dropped on one knee, and implored him, with a redundancy

of gesticulation, to hear what had brought himself into such foul company.

He told with perfect truth how it had come of a little contraband trading, and how he had in time been released from prison, and how he had gone away from those antecedents. How, at the house of entertainment called the Break of Day at Chalons on the Soane, he had been awakened in his bed at night, by the same assassin, then assuming the name of Lagnier, though his name had formerly been Rigaud; how the assassin had proposed that they should join their fortunes together; how he held the assassin in such dread and aversion that he had fled from him at daylight, and how he had ever since been haunted by the fear of seeing the assassin again and being claimed by him as an acquaintance. When he had related this, with an emphasis and poise on the word, assassin, peculiarly belonging to his own language, and which did not serve to render it less terrible to Clennam, he suddenly sprang to his feet, pounced upon the bill again, and with a vehemence that would have been absolute madness in any man of Northern origin, cried "Behold the same assassin! Here he is!"

In his passionate raptures, he at first forgot the fact that he had lately seen the assassin in London. On his remembering it, it suggested hope to Clennam that the recognition might be of later date than the night of the visit at his mother's; but, Cavalletto was too exact and clear about time and place, to leave any opening for doubt that it had preceded that occasion.

"Listen," said Arthur, very seriously. "This man, as we have read here, has wholly disappeared."

"Of it I am well content!" said Cavalletto, raising his eyes piously. "A thousand thanks to Heaven! Accursed assassin!"

"Not so," returned Clennam; "for, until something more is heard of him, I can never know an hour's peace."

"Enough, Benefactor; that is quite another thing. A million of excuses!"

"Now, Cavalletto," said Clennam, gently turning him by the arm, so that they looked into each other's eyes. "I am certain that for the little I have been able to do for you, you are the most sincerely grateful of men."

"I swear it!" cried the other.

"I know it. If you could find this man, or discover what has become of him, or gain any later intelligence whatever of him, you would render me a service above any other service I could receive in the world, and would make me (with far greater reason) as grateful to you as you are to me."

"I know not where to look," cried the little man, kissing Arthur's hand in a transport. "I know not where to begin. I know not where to go. But, courage! Enough! It matters not! I go, in this instant of time!"

"Not a word to any one but me, Cavalletto."

"Al-tró!" cried Cavalletto. And was gone with great speed.

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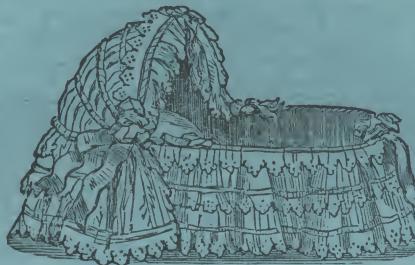
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